Beyond Marketplace Fulfillment

A Capability-Boundary Analysis of Amazon FBA, Amazon MCF, and Walmart WFS in Multichannel Ecommerce

Archival Practice Report

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Abstract

This archival practice report examines the operating boundary between marketplace fulfillment services and the upstream manufacturing-governance functions required by multichannel ecommerce businesses.

The analysis reviews official public information concerning Amazon Fulfillment by Amazon, Amazon Multi-Channel Fulfillment, Amazon Supply Chain Services, Amazon Warehousing and Distribution, Global Warehousing and Distribution, Walmart Fulfillment Services, Walmart Multichannel Solutions, and Walmart Cross Border: Imports.

The evidence shows that Amazon and Walmart now provide capabilities extending beyond domestic storage, picking, packing, and shipping. Depending on the program, product, route, account eligibility, and integration, these capabilities may include international inbound transportation, customs coordination, bulk storage, inventory replenishment, multichannel fulfillment, customer support, returns processing, and selected cross-channel inventory management.

These expanded services do not automatically transfer responsibility for product definition, supplier qualification, production scheduling, material-change approval, manufacturing inspection, batch-release decisions, primary packaging control, or supplier corrective action.

The report proposes a factory-to-network control layer based on supplier resilience, pre-inbound quality control, packaging governance, lifecycle inventory visibility, and returns recovery with corrective feedback. It also presents practical failure signals, a total-cost framework, and a method for reviewing capability ownership without replacing platform services that already perform effectively.

The central conclusion is that the appropriate decision is not simply whether to use a marketplace fulfillment platform or an independent logistics provider. The more important question is whether every operational capability has an accountable owner and whether that ownership is supported by verifiable evidence.

Keywords

Amazon FBA; Amazon MCF; Amazon Supply Chain Services; Amazon AWD; Walmart WFS; Walmart Multichannel Solutions; multichannel ecommerce; ecommerce fulfillment; supply-chain governance; supplier management; quality control; packaging governance; inventory visibility; returns recovery; China sourcing

Archival Note

This edition was prepared as a self-contained public record for preservation and access through Internet Archive.

It substantially revises an earlier commercially oriented web article. Promotional calls to action, unsourced fee comparisons, absolute platform claims, and the description of Amazon MCF routing as a “loophole” have been removed. Current platform statements are based primarily on official Amazon and Walmart materials retrieved on 29 July 2026.

Platform services, fees, eligibility rules, terminology, integrations, and geographic coverage may change after the publication date. This report should therefore be interpreted as a dated capability assessment rather than a permanent statement of platform policy.

Publication on Internet Archive provides preservation and public access. It does not constitute peer review, academic endorsement, or verification by Internet Archive.

Introduction

Consider an ecommerce business that allocates inventory between Amazon and Walmart.

Amazon may receive its assigned inventory correctly and fulfill Amazon orders through FBA. Walmart may receive another inventory pool and fulfill Walmart orders through WFS. Both platforms may store, pick, pack, ship, track, support, and process returns according to their applicable service rules.

The operation can still fail before inventory reaches either network.

A supplier may miss a production deadline. A material may be changed without approval. A batch may fail inspection. Product packaging may not match the approved artwork. Inventory still under production may be treated as though it were already sellable. Returned products may be refunded without being connected to their production lot or supplier.

These failures should not automatically be interpreted as fulfillment failures. They may originate in activities that were never assigned to the fulfillment platform.

Older comparisons frequently described Amazon FBA and Walmart WFS as services limited to storage, picking, packing, and shipping after inventory reached a domestic fulfillment center. That description is no longer complete.

Amazon now describes a connected portfolio that can collect products from manufacturing facilities, move them across borders, coordinate customs clearance, store inventory in bulk, replenish fulfillment centers, manage

distribution across channels, and deliver orders to customers. Walmart similarly provides multichannel fulfillment and selected cross-border import services from China, India, and Vietnam into its United States fulfillment network.

The platform boundary has therefore expanded. It has not, however, expanded to include every decision concerning the product, supplier, manufacturing process, packaging version, or corrective action.

This report treats the problem as one of capability ownership.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this report is to distinguish documented platform capabilities from responsibilities that normally remain with the seller, supplier, internal operations team, inspection company, software provider, sourcing partner, or another contracted organization.

The analysis focuses on the lifecycle beginning with product definition and supplier production, continuing through international movement and marketplace fulfillment, and ending with customer returns and corrective feedback.

The services examined include Amazon FBA, Amazon MCF, Amazon Supply Chain Services, Amazon Warehousing and Distribution, Global Warehousing and Distribution, Walmart WFS, Walmart Multichannel Solutions, and Walmart Cross Border: Imports.

This is not a provider ranking. It does not test comparative delivery performance, cost savings, defect rates, or customer satisfaction. It does not claim that one platform or service model is universally superior.

Method

Current platform capabilities were reviewed primarily through official Amazon and Walmart public materials available on 29 July 2026.

Each capability was evaluated separately. International transportation, supplier qualification, bulk storage, production inspection, multichannel fulfillment, packaging control, returns processing, and supplier corrective action were treated as distinct operational functions.

Documented core coverage refers to a function directly included in the public description of a service. Conditional coverage refers to a function available through a separate program, integration, geographic route, product-eligibility rule, or account configuration. Residual ownership refers to a function for which no standard platform coverage was identified in the public materials reviewed.

Residual ownership does not mean that a platform could never provide the function through a private or customized agreement. It means that the seller should not assume the function is included without written confirmation.

Platform marketing statements were treated as evidence of publicly described service scope. They were not treated as independent evidence that the service produces a particular financial or operational result for every seller.

The proposed control framework is informed by the author's practitioner experience in China-side sourcing, inspection, packaging preparation, inventory coordination, and ecommerce fulfillment. No confidential customer records or transaction-level marketplace data were used.

The Current Amazon Capability Boundary

Amazon FBA enables sellers to send eligible products into Amazon's fulfillment network. Amazon stores the inventory, picks and packs orders, ships products to customers, and handles applicable customer service and returns. These functions are described on the official Amazon FBA page.

Amazon MCF extends the use of Amazon inventory to orders originating outside the Amazon marketplace. Sellers can use inventory held within the Amazon ecosystem to fulfill orders from brand websites and other ecommerce channels.

Amazon also officially describes the use of MCF for Walmart Marketplace orders. Eligible orders can be shipped in blank packaging without Amazon branding, and sellers can block Amazon Logistics when the receiving marketplace requires alternate carriers. This is a documented routing option rather than an unofficial loophole. Account configuration, carrier charges, integration support, product eligibility, and current marketplace policies should still be confirmed before the seller commits substantial volume. The relevant conditions are described in Amazon's guidance on using MCF for Walmart Marketplace orders.

Amazon Supply Chain Services extends further upstream. Amazon states that the service portfolio can collect inventory from manufacturing facilities, transport it across borders, handle customs clearance and ground transportation, store products in bulk, manage replenishment, fulfill orders across sales channels, and deliver products to customers. These capabilities are described on the official Amazon Supply Chain Services page.

Amazon Warehousing and Distribution provides bulk storage and replenishment into the Amazon fulfillment network. Amazon also states that AWD inventory can be distributed to non-Amazon channels, including Walmart Fulfillment Services. Global Warehousing and Distribution provides selected storage in Shenzhen and replenishment into the United States Amazon network. These services are described on the official Amazon Warehousing and Distribution page.

These services demonstrate that Amazon's operating scope can extend from the factory floor to the customer's door.

The phrase "factory floor," however, should be interpreted carefully. The documented services focus on transportation, customs coordination, storage, distribution, replenishment, fulfillment, and delivery. The public descriptions reviewed do not establish standard Amazon responsibility for selecting the supplier, defining the product specification, approving material changes, supervising the manufacturing process, or independently releasing a production batch after inspection.

Amazon may move inventory from a manufacturing facility without assuming responsibility for how the product was manufactured.

The Current Walmart Capability Boundary

Walmart WFS allows eligible sellers to send inventory to Walmart fulfillment centers. Walmart stores the products, fulfills customer orders, handles order-related support, and processes applicable returns. The current service scope is described on the official Walmart Fulfillment Services page.

Walmart Multichannel Solutions enables inventory held within WFS to fulfill orders originating from other ecommerce channels. Walmart states that eligible orders can be shipped in unbranded packaging and that returns can be sent by mail to Walmart facilities. Integrations with external solution providers can support order management, inventory synchronization, and restock coordination. These capabilities are described on the official Walmart Multichannel Solutions page.

Walmart Cross Border: Imports provides selected full-container and less-than-container transportation from China, India, and Vietnam. Its public description includes customs coordination, exception handling, inbound processing, shipment tracking, and distribution into the United States WFS network. The program is described on the official Walmart Cross Border: Imports page.

Walmart therefore also provides more than domestic storage and final-mile fulfillment.

The public materials reviewed do not identify supplier approval, production scheduling, specification control, manufacturing-process supervision, independent batch release, or supplier corrective-action management as standard WFS responsibilities.

The Actual Boundary

The most useful distinction is not simply the boundary between a factory and a warehouse.

The more accurate distinction is between moving and allocating inventory and governing what the inventory actually is.

Transportation, customs handling, storage, replenishment, fulfillment, customer support, and returns processing concern the movement and operational handling of inventory.

Product specifications, approved samples, supplier qualification, material-change control, production inspection, batch release, primary packaging approval, and corrective action concern the definition and manufacturing integrity of that inventory.

Platform coverage of the first category has expanded considerably. The second category still requires a clearly identified accountable owner.

Supplier Resilience and Change Control

Supplier resilience is the ability to maintain the approved product standard when demand, capacity, lead times, materials, or production conditions change.

A purchase order alone does not create resilience. The business also needs an approved product specification, a confirmed production schedule, capacity evidence, agreed material and component requirements, a process for approving changes, and an escalation path for delays or defects.

A supplier may replace a component because the original component is unavailable. It may alter a color, material, production line, mold, adhesive, finish, or packaging supplier to meet a delivery date. Some changes may be commercially reasonable, but they should not occur without approval when they affect function, safety, compliance, durability, appearance, or customer expectations.

A backup supplier is not qualified merely because it can manufacture a similar product. It must be able to reproduce the approved product within defined tolerances and documentation requirements.

Fulfillment speed cannot compensate for uncontrolled product changes. A fast network may simply distribute the inconsistent product more quickly.

Pre-Inbound Inspection and Batch Release

Quality control should begin with measurable requirements rather than a general instruction to inspect the goods.

The inspection plan should reflect the product's functional, regulatory, safety, and commercial risks. Relevant evidence may include purchase-order verification, quantity confirmation, material checks, color comparison, dimensional measurements, workmanship inspection, functional testing, accessory confirmation, packaging verification, label review, photographic records, and production-lot identification.

The process should end with a clear disposition.

A batch may be released, held for review, reworked, partially replaced, or rejected. The applicable decision should be documented before inventory enters a large fulfillment network.

An inspection report without a release decision may record useful information without creating operational control.

This boundary is important because a fulfillment network is designed to distribute inventory efficiently. If compliant inventory enters the network, that efficiency is an advantage. If defective inventory enters the same network, efficient distribution can increase the number of affected customers before the problem is recognized.

Packaging Governance

Product packaging and shipping packaging are different operational layers.

Amazon MCF and Walmart Multichannel Solutions describe the outer packaging used to deliver eligible multichannel orders. Unbranded shipping packaging can reduce marketplace conflicts and provide a neutral delivery experience.

It does not replace control of the retail box, product bag, container, instruction manual, warning label, compliance information, barcode, insert, protective material, or artwork associated with the product itself.

The business should maintain an approved packaging version for each relevant product and route. That record should identify the artwork, materials, dimensions, barcode placement, instructions, warnings, protective components, carton configuration, effective date, and approval owner.

Every production lot should be traceable to the packaging version used.

Without version control, different factories or production runs may use outdated instructions, inconsistent colors, missing accessories, obsolete warnings, or packaging that no longer matches the product listing.

Lifecycle Inventory Visibility

Inventory is not a single quantity.

A unit awaiting raw materials is different from a unit in production. A unit awaiting inspection is different from one released for export. Inventory moving internationally is different from inventory that has cleared customs. Inventory received at a fulfillment center may still be unavailable for sale. A returned unit is not sellable until its condition and disposition are confirmed.

Amazon and Walmart both provide meaningful inventory visibility within their service ecosystems. Integrations can also improve order and stock coordination across connected sales channels.

The remaining challenge is establishing a complete lifecycle view when information is distributed across factories, sourcing teams, freight providers, customs processes, marketplace networks, direct-to-consumer warehouses, ecommerce stores, and returns locations.

A useful inventory record should show quantity, location, operational state, inspection status, expected sellable date, blocking issue, responsible owner, supporting evidence, and last update time.

Visibility creates value when it changes a decision. Displaying more data is not sufficient if the business cannot identify which quantity is genuinely available or who must resolve the next constraint.

Returns Recovery and Corrective Feedback

Processing a return and learning from a return are different capabilities.

A platform may receive the returned unit, issue a refund, inspect the product, and apply the seller’s configured disposition. That process can close the customer-service case.

A product-learning process goes further. It connects the return with the SKU, supplier, purchase order, production lot, packaging version, inspection record, defect classification, and corrective action.

A repeated defect should not remain an isolated refund event. It should become evidence used to change the next production run.

Subject to product safety, hygiene, regulatory, and commercial restrictions, some returned products may also retain recoverable value. Inspection, cleaning, repackaging, accessory replacement, minor rework, secondary-market sale, or return to sellable inventory may be possible.

The appropriate decision depends on the product. The central requirement is that the return receives a deliberate disposition rather than being treated automatically as valueless.

Observable Failure Signals

Replenishment Instability

Replenishment instability appears when purchase orders repeatedly miss required availability dates or when emergency transportation becomes routine.

The relevant forecast must include supplier lead time, inspection, corrective action, international movement, customs handling, warehouse receiving, and the delay before inventory becomes sellable.

A platform replenishment tool may manage inventory already inside the platform ecosystem. It cannot automatically correct an unconfirmed factory schedule or an unresolved production failure.

Lot-Related Quality Problems

A lot-related quality problem appears when complaints or returns increase after a particular production batch enters the network.

The business should be able to identify which customers received units from the affected lot, which inspection evidence supported release, and which supplier process produced the defect.

Without lot traceability, the seller may know that a product has a problem without knowing which inventory should be held or corrected.

Uncontrolled Supplier Changes

An uncontrolled change occurs when a supplier alters a material, color, component, production process, mold, finish, or packaging element without documented approval.

The product may remain visually similar while its performance, durability, compliance, or customer experience changes.

Supplier-change requests should be reviewed before the modified product enters full production.

Packaging-Version Drift

Packaging drift occurs when customers receive inconsistent boxes, instructions, labels, inserts, accessories, or warnings.

The cause may be an obsolete artwork file, an unapproved packaging supplier, an incomplete production order, or a misunderstanding about the difference between product packaging and shipping packaging.

A version-controlled packaging record makes the origin of the inconsistency easier to identify.

Lifecycle Visibility Gaps

A visibility gap exists when teams cannot reconcile inventory in production, awaiting inspection, in international transit, awaiting warehouse receipt, available for sale, reserved, returned, damaged, or quarantined.

The problem is not necessarily a lack of dashboards. It may be a lack of common definitions and accountable owners across the dashboards.

Cross-Channel Allocation Mismatch

An allocation mismatch occurs when one sales channel accepts an order for inventory already committed elsewhere.

Multichannel fulfillment and inventory integrations can reduce this risk, but the business still needs an authoritative inventory source and clearly defined synchronization rules.

Update delays, reserved inventory, damaged units, manual adjustments, and disconnected production quantities can all create differences between displayed stock and genuine availability.

Returns-Learning Failure

A returns-learning failure occurs when refunds, removals, liquidations, or disposals are completed without identifying the manufacturing cause.

The customer issue may be closed while the supplier continues producing the same defect.

Returns should be reviewed as both customer-service events and production evidence.

Amazon MCF and Walmart Marketplace Routing

Using Amazon MCF to fulfill eligible Walmart Marketplace orders should be treated as a documented multichannel routing option.

Amazon states that MCF orders can use blank packaging and that Amazon Logistics can be blocked for Walmart orders requiring alternate carriers. Supported integrations can transmit Walmart orders to MCF, synchronize applicable inventory information, and return tracking details to Walmart.

This arrangement may allow one Amazon-held inventory pool to support demand from both Amazon and Walmart. It can reduce duplicated inventory in suitable cases.

It does not eliminate every operational boundary.

The seller must still verify product eligibility, packaging requirements, carrier settings, integration behavior, delivery promises, returns handling, marketplace policy, and current charges. The arrangement also does not assign Amazon responsibility for supplier selection, production inspection, product-packaging approval, or supplier corrective action.

A routing improvement should not be mistaken for complete supply-chain governance.

Total-Cost Evaluation

Fulfillment decisions should not be based only on a quoted per-order rate.

A broader evaluation can be expressed as:

Total operating cost = platform and service fees + inbound logistics + inventory carrying cost + quality-failure cost + stockout and overselling cost + returns and recovery cost + compliance cost + governance and integration cost

Platform and service fees may include fulfillment, storage, aged-inventory charges, returns processing, inbound placement, carrier selection, and optional program costs.

Inbound logistics may include origin handling, international transportation, customs coordination, domestic transfer, distribution, and receiving.

Inventory carrying cost includes the cost of capital, storage duration, excess stock, aging, and obsolescence.

Quality-failure cost includes inspection failures, rework, replacements, refunds, negative reviews, lost repeat purchases, and supplier corrective action.

Stockout and overselling cost includes lost contribution margin, cancelled orders, emergency replenishment, and marketplace-performance effects.

Returns and recovery cost includes customer returns, inspection, repackaging, rework, resale, removal, liquidation, and disposal.

Compliance cost may include testing, labeling, documentation, certification, product-safety work, and qualified professional advice.

Governance and integration cost includes internal staff, inspection services, supplier management, inventory systems, order-management software, and external coordination.

Platform fees and program rules change. Sellers should use current account-level calculators and actual product dimensions, weights, sales velocity, storage duration, return rates, and channel mix.

Fixed fee comparisons from secondary articles should not substitute for a seller’s own SKU-level analysis.

A Practical Capability Review

Map Operational Ownership

The business should document every activity from product definition to final return disposition.

Each activity should have one accountable owner. Terms such as “handled by Amazon,” “handled by Walmart,” “handled by the factory,” or “handled by the agent” should be replaced with the exact capability, program, evidence requirement, and decision authority.

Review Recent Failures

Recent stockouts, late purchase orders, quality complaints, packaging errors, inventory adjustments, oversold orders, returns, removals, and emergency shipments should be traced back to the earliest stage at which they became preventable.

The point at which a customer experienced the failure may not be the point at which the failure originated.

Calculate the Wider Cost

The business should estimate the effect of its most frequent or damaging failures on refunds, replacements, emergency transportation, lost sales, inventory write-offs, staff time, customer retention, marketplace performance, and supplier rework.

This creates a more realistic basis for deciding whether an additional control is worth its cost.

Add the Narrowest Effective Control

The correction should be applied at the stage where the failure originates.

Replacing a fulfillment provider may not solve a supplier, inspection, packaging, or systems problem. If the platform is performing its documented responsibilities effectively, the more efficient solution may be to retain it and add control at the missing boundary.

When a Platform-Led Model May Be Sufficient

An external China-side control provider is not automatically required.

A platform-led model may be sufficient when the business already has reliable supplier qualification, stable product specifications, documented production standards, formal approval for material changes, effective pre-inbound inspection, predictable replenishment, controlled packaging, adequate lifecycle visibility, and a working returns process.

The same may be true for a business with a limited catalog, low operational complexity, stable demand, or an experienced internal sourcing and quality team.

In these situations, the factory-to-network control layer has not disappeared. It is being performed internally or through existing suppliers and service providers.

Operational infrastructure should be proportional to the actual risk and complexity of the business.

The Potential Role of a China-Side Partner

For businesses manufacturing or sourcing products in China, residual functions may be assigned to an internal team, the supplier, an independent inspection company, a sourcing agent, a logistics provider, or a combined service partner.

ASG Dropshipping is one possible provider for selected activities involving supplier sourcing and coordination, production follow-up, inspection, packaging preparation, China-side inventory status, factory-to-warehouse movement, direct fulfillment, and returns-related rework support.

This role is potentially complementary to Amazon and Walmart services.

ASG does not replace the seller's Amazon or Walmart account, the seller's legal responsibilities, platform eligibility decisions, licensed customs professionals, tax advisers, or product-compliance specialists.

This report does not compare ASG with competing providers and does not establish that ASG is necessary, superior, or cost-effective for a particular seller.

No ASG performance statistics are used as evidence for the framework presented in this archival edition.

Limitations

This report reflects public documentation reviewed on 29 July 2026. Platform terminology, availability, fees, packaging rules, geographic coverage, integrations, and eligibility requirements may change.

Public marketing pages do not contain every contractual or account-specific condition. Sellers should confirm service coverage and operational settings inside their own platform accounts.

A publicly described service may not be available for every seller, product, country, route, or category.

The analysis evaluates documented capability boundaries. It does not independently test delivery speed, service quality, financial savings, operational reliability, or customer outcomes.

No transaction-level dataset was used to compare Amazon, Walmart, ASG, or independent logistics providers.

The proposed control framework and failure signals are practitioner tools. They have not been statistically validated.

The author operates a commercial sourcing and fulfillment company. This creates a potential incentive to emphasize manufacturing and China-side control gaps.

Data and Materials Statement

No original research dataset was created for this report.

The platform evidence consists of publicly accessible official sources identified in the references. No confidential customer data, personal information, or private marketplace records were used.

The conceptual framework, operational signals, total-cost model, and capability-review method are reproduced in full within this article.

No software code or computational analysis was used.

Ethics Statement

This report did not involve human participants, personal data, clinical information, or animal research. Formal research ethics approval was therefore not required.

Funding Statement

No external research funding was received for this report.

Competing Interests

Janson Wang is the CEO and founder of ASG Dropshipping, a commercial sourcing and fulfillment company that may provide some of the services discussed in this report.

Readers should consider this commercial interest when evaluating the practitioner interpretation and the discussion of China-side service providers.

Generative AI Disclosure

A generative AI language model was used to assist with manuscript restructuring, language editing, and source organization.

The author is responsible for reviewing the cited sources, verifying factual claims, interpreting the evidence, and approving the final text.

Legal and Commercial Disclaimer

This report provides general operational information. It is not legal, tax, customs, product-safety, financial, or marketplace-compliance advice.

Businesses should verify current program rules through their own platform accounts and seek qualified professional advice where appropriate.

Conclusion

Amazon FBA and Walmart WFS should no longer be described simply as marketplace warehouses.

Amazon and Walmart now provide capabilities extending into international inbound transportation, customs coordination, bulk storage, replenishment, multichannel fulfillment, customer support, and returns.

These expanded services close important logistics gaps. They do not automatically transfer ownership of product definition, supplier qualification, production decisions, material-change approval, manufacturing quality, primary packaging versions, or supplier corrective action.

The central management problem is therefore not choosing between a marketplace platform and a supply-chain partner.

It is determining who owns every capability.

A reliable operating model preserves platform services that already perform effectively while adding control where responsibility or evidence is missing.

A fulfillment dashboard can appear healthy while an upstream manufacturing problem is already developing. Capability mapping helps a business identify that problem before the customer does.

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